

Management Initiatives



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Civil Rights/ Equal Opportunity

GIPSA remains committed to ensuring Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity for all employees and the public we serve. FY 2000 accomplishments in the Civil Rights/Equal Opportunity area include:

Expanded Support of Educational Initiatives for Minorities. GIPSA expanded its support of educational initiatives, land grant, and other minority institutions, and the USDA summer intern program in FY 2000. GIPSA's goals were to provide opportunity for all and ensure the future diversity of the Agency's workforce. GIPSA has increased the number of cooperative programs with community-based organizations and minority-serving institutions; continued assistance to Alcorn State University's Ag Hope Program; increased funding and support for USDA 1890 institutions, Tribal Colleges initiatives and internships to disadvantaged/minority students. In FY 2000, GIPSA employed 31 summer interns, compared with 17 in FY 1999, and increased the number of students in the Student Career Experience Program and GIPSA scholarship program.

GIPSA continues to provide major support for the USDA/1890 and other special programs for recruitment. New agreements were established with Kentucky State University and Southern University's student recruitment programs to assist minority students in gaining awareness of agriculture and ag-related programs. GIPSA also continued support for a mentoring program for Hispanic students at the University of Puerto Rico. Through initiatives such as the USDA 1890 Scholars Program, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) initiatives, GIPSA scholarship program, USDA Summer Intern Program and the SCEP, GIPSA has set goals and objectives to use these programs to address areas of underrepresentation in Agency employment.

Further, GIPSA supported the USDA Excess Federal Property Program by providing usable excess equipment to 1890, 1862, and 1994 Land-Grant Institutions, Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, and to local community schools.

Hispanic Advisory Council. GIPSA is a member of the USDA Hispanic Advisory Council (HAC), which is charged with providing recommendations to the Secretary for increasing employment opportunities for Hispanics in USDA. As part of this effort, GIPSA provides leadership on two important HAC work groups. The Education and Research group is identifying ways to increase Hispanic participation in USDA's partnership activities and helping the Hispanic community attain educational excellence. The Forum for Best Business Practices initiated an employee feedback system that is designed to inform the Secretary about positive issues and actions impacting USDA employees and programs.

Outreach. GIPSA significantly increased its outreach efforts to small

disadvantaged and underserved customers to increase all parties' participation in and use of Agency programs and services. To this end, GIPSA provided support for the Black Farmers Conference; established funding resources for the Migrant Farm Labor Center in Hope, Arkansas; and increased funding for Title IX activities. In addition, GIPSA held two Town Hall Meetings with Tribal Nations to determine the need for financial assistance and/or other support; and a Millennium Conference to address the concerns of small and limited-resource farmers and ranchers.

Internal Communication. GIPSA undertook a number of initiatives to ensure open communication with all Agency employees on EO/CR issues. First, GIPSA maintains three hotlines (Civil Rights Hotline, Idea Hotline, and Town Hall Meeting Hotline) to provide avenues for employees to voice issues and concerns to senior management and to receive appropriate feedback. To assess employee satisfaction related to EO/CR issues, GIPSA implemented employee exit interviews; conducted all-employee Town Hall Meetings; and held regional meetings to hear and respond immediately to employee concerns. Finally, GIPSA developed a Civil Rights Handbook to provide guidance to Agency employees on Civil Rights issues.

Disability. GIPSA, with other USDA agencies, is supporting recruitment initiatives to increase the level of employment for persons with disabilities. GIPSA has designated a Disability Employment Program Manager, who is focusing Agency efforts on recruiting and hiring people with disabilities.

Small Farms Outreach

The challenges faced by small farmers in today's changing market and policy environments prompted GIPSA to strengthen its efforts to address the concerns of small and mid-sized farmers. While the Agency's programs benefit farms of all sizes, we are taking steps to ensure that all of our activities are sensitive to the particular needs of small farms.

GIPSA has a toll-free hotline, reorganized Packers and Stockyards Programs, and requested, and received, appropriated funds to add economic, statistical, and legal expertise to pursue investigations of packer concentration and poultry concerns. These efforts will increase customer awareness and involvement in our services. Peer review of investigations, expansion of roundtable discussions, and expanded use of information technology will provide small farmers access to and input into GIPSA's regulatory process. Stakeholder involvement in and feedback on our initiatives are essential to our goal of recognizing the small farmer as a priority constituent.

GIPSA has also been examining ways to implement relevant recommendations of the National Commission on Small Farms, formed by Secretary Glickman in February 1997. The Commission issued its report, "A Time to Act," in September 1997.

Environmental Justice

On February 11, 1994, President Clinton issued Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. The order was designed to focus Federal attention on the environmental and human health conditions in minority communities and low-income communities with the goal of achieving environmental justice. The order was also intended to promote non-discrimination in Federal programs that substantially affect human health and the environment. It also provides minority communities and low-income communities access to public information, and an opportunity for public participation in matters relating to health or the environment.

In accordance with Executive Order 12898, the USDA issued Departmental Regulation (DR) 5600-2, "Environmental Justice". This regulation provides for the integration of environmental justice considerations into USDA programs and activities, in addition to any National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance requirements that USDA agencies are obligated to meet. All existing and future USDA programs and activities are subject to this regulation and the requirements of executive order 12898 even if an agency's activities are categorically excluded from the preparation of Environmental Assessments and Impact Statements, as are GIPSA's.

In accordance with Section 1b.4 (a) of the NEPA, the programs and activities which are carried out by GIPSA have been found to have no individual or cumulative effect on the human environment. Therefore, GIPSA is categorically excluded from the preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement, unless the GIPSA Administrator determines that a particular program or action may have a significant environmental effect.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned exclusion, in FY 2000, GIPSA managers were directed to continue to scrutinize their programs and activities to ensure that circumstances do not dictate the need for the preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

Workplace Violence Prevention

GIPSA is concerned about and committed to our employees' safety and health. In FY 2000, GIPSA reinforced its policy of making every effort to prevent violent incidents from occurring. In accordance with the recommendations put forth by USDA and the Agency's continuing commitment to supporting the Secretary in improving all areas of safety and health, GIPSA took the following actions:

- Developed a new Workplace Violence Prevention Program.

- Initiated a nationwide workplace violence prevention-training program. The GIPSA Safety and Health Staff (SHS) conducted a series of nationwide training sessions. The first series was for first-line supervisors at GIPSA field locations. The second, conducted in May in Kansas City, Missouri, included all mid- and senior-level managers. A third series for non-supervisory employees is planned for fiscal years 2001 and 2002.
- Continued to seek early resolution of potential workplace violence situations.
- Continued to play a major role on the USDA Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Advisory Committee.

Union/Management Relations

The Agency continues to maintain a Partnership Council with the American Federation of Government Employee's National Council 237. In FY 2000, the Council adopted a Travel Gainsharing Program for the Agency. This program is designed to encourage employees to save authorized official travel expenses by awarding employees with one-half the net savings they realize.

Explosion Data

GIPSA receives information on agricultural dust explosions through the cooperation of Dr. Robert Schoeff, Professor Emeritus, Kansas State University, Mavis Rogers, GIPSA, and a news clipping service. GIPSA does not investigate agricultural dust explosions and the private sector is not required to report explosions to GIPSA. This data is subject to change as new information becomes available.

Summary of Reported Grain Dust Explosions, Fiscal Years 1996-2000

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Number of Explosions	16	14	18	11	7
Number of Injuries	26	8	22	15	16
Number of Deaths	1	1	7	0	1

**Summary of Reported
Grain Dust Explosions,
Fiscal Year 2000**

Facility	Location	Date	Injuries	Fatalities
Premier Feeds	Reedsville, WI	10/26/99	7	0
Worley Mills Grain Elevator	Clovis, MN	01/22/00	3	0
Wheeler Brothers Grain Elevator	Greenfield, OK	01/24/00	0	0
First Fiber, Inc.	Surgoinsville, TN	03/20/00	1	0
Refined Sugars, Inc.	Yonkers, NY	03/22/00	1	0
Mississippi River Bend Terminal	Clayton, IA	05/08/00	0	0
Endres Processing	Rosemount, MN	05/15/00	4	1